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The Emancipation of the Serfs in Russia and its Consequences

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GERTRUDE HALUSHKA

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Gertrude Halushka

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IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Bachelor of Arts

Albert H. Lybyer Instructor in Charge

APPROVED: Evarts B. Greene

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT OF History.

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Introduction.

The emancipation of the serfs in Russia was an event which has had a very remarkable influence upon the development and progress of that country; for by the Edict of Emancipation proclaimed by Alexander II. on February 19th,1861, the serfs, who then constituted eighty-two per cent of the entire population, received their freedom (1). The act of emancipation was different from similar ones issued by the various Western European countries, and was particularly unlike that which, two years later, freed the slaves in America, for the antecedent conditions as well as the terms of the act and its results were of a different nature and character. Although the Russian peasant had been bound to the soil for two and a half centuries, there still lingered in him an innate desire to regain the freedom which he had completely lost in 1601 when a law was passed binding him to the soil (2). Yet it was not within his power to effect any measures which might have brought about the desired results. It devolved upon the landowners, members of the aristocracy, to do it, for as Alexander II said, "Emancipation must be brought about from above not from below "(3). The nobles, too, seemed desirous of emancipating the serfs, being prompted partly by humanitarian reasons, partly because they thought that

(1). Stepniak, Russian Peasantry , p.5.

(2). Marx. F., Serf and the Cossack , p.19.

(3). Zilliacus, K.,Russian Revolutionary Movement, p.39.

economic conditions would then be improved, and partly also perhaps, by hopes of gaining political power, for they realized that a political change would eventually follow. Nicholas I. had been aware of the evils of serfdom, and during his reign had appointed several committees to study the problem, which was done with no results. With regard to the condition of human bondage he once said, "I do not understand how man came to be a thing and I can explain the fact only by deception on one side and ignorance on the other. We must make an end to this. It is better we should give up, of our own account, that which might otherwise be wrested from us " (1).

No definite agitation began, however, until after the Crimean war, in 1857. Then Alexander II , who had ascended to the throne as Czar in 1855, requested the landowners to submit petitions to him for the suppresion of the evil. Alexander II, though the son of the rigid Nicholas I, was open minded. During the first few years of his reign, he followed a reform policy which included measures removing restrictions of various sorts such as the censorship of the press. Most important of all his reforms was the one which gave him the name of Alexander, "the Liberator", and which made his reign famous, namely, the Edict of Emancipation, which freed approximately forty-seven million people (2). He also had a number of able supporters, nobles and princes, who helped him carry out his scheme. One of the

(1) Hazen, C., <u>Europe Since 1815</u>, p.653.

(2) Skrine, F. H., <u>Expansion of Russia</u>, p.179.

foremost among these was Nicholas Miliutin (1), an honest sincere reformer who had the interest of the peasants in view, in contrast to most of his fellow workers, who soon became very corrupt, and worked mainly in their own interests.

As a whole, the immediate results of the proclamation were anything but satisfactory. There was discontentment and complaining everywhere. The serfs believed that after gaining their freedom, the land would be theirs gratis, for they felt that the land had always been theirs, and that it was only their personal freedom which had been taken away years before. The cry they raised was "*Mui vashi no zemlya' nasha*," we are yours, but the land is ours; and they protested severely and bitterly against paying redemption fees for the small allotments of land that were given them. The nobles, on the other hand, felt that they were not being given just compensation for the land which had been taken from them and given to the peasants. But Alexander II and his advisers were evidently able to cope with the situation, by making a compromise between the two dissatisfied factions.

After the authority of the landlords had been removed from so great a portion of the population, a new form of government had to be devised, which took the form of the *mir* and the *velost.* Shortly afterwards the *zemstvos* were created which were to aid the peasants, to make recommendations to them with regards to crops and agricultural methods; to build roads, schools, and asylums, but not to interfere politically (2). Factory

(1) Kovalevsky, M., *Russian Political Institutions*, p.197.

(2) Wallace, D., *Russia* (1908), p.489.

systems were started by Russian capitalists and foreigners, and many other reforms were installed.

The government of Russia is very autocratic, and as every little act or measure requires an endless amount of red tape, it is too slow in operation to admit of marked or rapid development, and is very reluctant about granting more than what seems absolutely necessary. The bourgeoisie is still a very small class, the population being mostly either agrarian or noble, and so the peasants have no medium through which they can make requests or demands. Furthermore, the peasants look upon those higher than themselves with mistrust and suspicion, and do not readily acquiesce in proposals or propositions that these may offer.

CHAPTER I.

The Condition of the Peasantry before Serfdom Developed.

The most primitive manner of life of the Russian peasant, the mujik, is said to have been that of the joint family, the chief characteristics of which were joint habitation, undivided property, and paternal authority (1). A representative family of this kind consisted of from ten to twenty and sometimes even fifty persons, who lived together, and whose property remained undivided among the children. The House Elder was "primus inter pares " (2). He was the chief of the family council, who answered and made complaints. If an individual wished to sell his interest, he could do so only with the consent of the members of the house. Then the stranger who took his share had to submit to the family rules and authority. But this manner of living was impractical and gradually broke down, for the able and laborious members would have to work for the shiftless and incapable ones. No one had any land or capital that he could call his own, and there was beginning to be a slight resistance to unlimited paternal authority (3). Some writers say that out of this simple life, the communes sprang spontaneously; while others say that the communes were created because the government wanted revenue. They thought that by making the communes responsible

(1) Mavor, J., Economic History of Russia, p.264.

(2) Ibid., p.265.

(3) Ibid., p.266.

for the taxes they would be more certain of obtaining them (1).

The soil originally belonged to the nation *en masse*, and the Czar alone could give land away. Consequently, the communes as well as private domains, were held directly from the crown. The former consisted of the village in which the peasants lived, and the outlying arable, waste, and forest lands. The waste and forest lands were used freely by all, as no one had any individual claim to any part of them. But the agrarian areas were placed in the hands of the private householders, who paid an *obrok*, money tax, or *corvée*, labor tax, for the use of these. Reapportionment of the farms was authorized only at certain times (1), and then each householder's share would be increased or diminished in proportion as its number of *souls*, which word was used to designate the male tax payers, was increased or diminished.

At the head of this unit or *mir* was the *starost*, or mayor, who was elected annually and received a salary. He presided at communal meetings where the heads of the families met to decide their affairs, to make provisions for the poor, and to look after the property of widows and orphans (2). They carried measures on the principle of "one man, one vote" and unanimity was required to pass any measure. As representative of the *mir*, the *starost* was responsible for the collecting of taxes. The duties of the *velost* were in relation to the government rather than to individuals.

The economic and social conditions of the early *mujik*

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(1) Kovalevsky, M., *Modern Customs and Ancient Laws of Russia*, p.70.

(2) Baring, M., *The Russian People*, p.235.

were very low. Economically there was a great waste of time, energy, and land because of the three field system. This method of cultivation was undoubtedly very inconvenient and wasteful, for the strips assigned to an individual were not infrequently in different parts of the community, thereby causing much unnecessary travelling to and from them. Not only was time wasted, but because of the division of the land in long narrow strips much of it was wasted in the boundaries between. Furthermore, as agricultural methods were very crude, the soil did not yield as much as might have been the case with better care. Socially, the large family life prevented the pure, wholesome sanitary living which can be obtained only through isolation (1). Wife beating was not uncommon. In fact, wives were often treated like domestic animals. Love seldom seemed to be a factor in marriage. And drunkenness, which is still a vice of the Russian peasant, made him then as brutish, at times, as it does now.

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(1) Leroy-Beaulieu, A., _Empire of the Tsars_, p.500.

CHAPTER II.

Rise and Development of Serfdom.

The multitude of serfs who existed in Russia in the sixteenth century was the result of a fusion of several different classes. There were the prisoners of war who had been taken as slaves, insolvent debtors, and free agricultural laborers who became serfs that they might have a sufficient amount to live on (1). Then there were the free peasants who were members of a commune, but who owned the land only in usufruct. Some communes had land of their own, but others had to rent it from the nobles to whom they paid the obrok or corvée. Very often the peasant would borrow money from the landlord on condition of performing certain work as long as the debt remained unpaid. But as was frequently the case, he was unable to save up an amount equal to his debt, and so would have to work for the proprietor for life (2). The peasants had usually been more or less unrestrained in their rovings, and had always been granted government protection. However, in the middle ages when the Czars had no other means of paying the nobles for their services, they gave them lands, and with these lands the peasants who lived on them. Thereby, authority was transferred from the government to the landlord, who became very tyrannical (3). He converted anyone who thwarted his will into a domestic slave. There were laws limiting the amount of punishment he might inflict upon his

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia, (1908) p.405.

(2) Kovalevsky, M., Russia Political Institutions, p.213.

(3) Wallace, D. M., Russia, (1908) p.411.

manorial subjects, but he could readily evade these.

After the lords became proprietors, the nomadic spirit of the serfs had to cease, for when the peasants would leave the manors to find a better, richer place, there would sometimes be very few left to take care of the large estates. So by a law passed in 1497 their removal was limited to one day a year, which was on the feast of St. George, November 26. On that day and no other could they leave, to hire themselves out elsewhere. Their landlords at times made them so drunk on that day, that they would remain, and then of course they would have to stay another year. But even before this, in 1478 (2), the monks were granted the privilege of keeping their peasants, as it facilitated the collecting of taxes. These acts merely anticipated the main act which bound the peasant to the soil. This was the decree of Boris Godunov, in 1597, which forbade the peasants to migrate(3). Henceforth, they could not leave. They were glebae adscripti, bound to the soil, and subject to oppression which could not be mitigated by finding a more lenient proprietor. But to the owners a decree to this effect seemed imperatively necessary. The peasants naturally preferred going to the richer parts of Russia, and this left the unfavorable parts without any cultivators. Accordingly the proprietors of estates in those regions would constantly be in need of laborers, (4). The nobles did

(1) Kovalevsky, M., Russian Institutions, p.214.
(2) Ibid., p.214.
(3) Ibid., p.217.
(4) Zilliacus, K., Russian Revolutionary Movement, p.401.

their utmost to legalize the binding of the serfs, for they were the soldiers whom the peasants had to support. When they went to war they wanted to feel that things were secure on their manors, and that the peasants would not leave during their absence. During the eighteenth century, further imperial legislation strengthened the bonds which deprived the mujik of his liberty. In 1719, a capitation tax was introduced which abolished the land tax, and which established a mutual responsibility of persons. This act placed a tax upon each "soul", and made him responsible for the amount whether he remained in the community or had obtained permission to leave it. As long as he was a member of a commune he was subject to the tax. From 1722, a regular register was kept which included the contract of the peasant with his landlord, and became a means of legally making the binding of the peasant to the soil hereditary (1). Another factor that aided in the establishment of serfdom, was that free peasants, very often, were unable to pay their rent, and when this happened they were forced to remain. The rent for their homestead in the manorial place was one-tenth of the value of the homestead (2). The rent for the farms varied. Sometimes it was a certain proportion of the produce, sometimes money, and sometimes labor. But after giving the lord his share of the produce the peasant often had to buy it back again at a high price, as he would not have enough for his own use.

(1) Leroy Beaulieu, A. Empire of Tsars, p.413.

(2) Kovalevsky, M. Russian Institutions, p.213.

Serfdom spread gradually over all of Russia. Each Czar gave his favorites grants of land with serfs on them until the climax was reached in the reign of Catherine II. In her time serfdom was extended into Little Russia. The condition of the serf had become as low as it could be. He had lost his liberty and later all his civil rights; he could not move about, and was subject to relentless oppression. He was severely punished for the most inoffensive acts, and had no right of appeal.

CHAPTER III.

The Serfs.

Just previous to the Emancipation Act, the entire population of Russia was composed of 60,900,000 persons. Of these 49,400,000 were peasants. Of the peasants 23,100,000 were state peasants, 23,000,000 were on the lands of proprietors, and 3,000,000 lived on appanages (1). Serfage seemed to have started and radiated from Moscow, the percentage of the serfs in the south increasing while that in the north decreased. ✓ In parts of the west and northwest in habited by the Germanic elements, Tartars, Roumanians, and Finns, this institution was very weak, for the Slavs seemed less resisting in giving up their personal liberty than did the others. This may have been partly due to the fact that the Slavs had for generations been subject to such strict paternal rule at home that they became very submissive, and also due to the fact that in the south and east the lands were richer and more fertile, and so estates would more readily be taken up there than in the north (2).

The serfs lived either in communes, rented from a lord, or from the state, or on appanages as domestic serfs. The tenure of land was very much the same as it was after 1861 except that the communes became responsible to the state then instead of to the lord. The rent could be paid in either of

(1) Wallace, D. M., <u>Russia</u>, (1908), p.417.

(2) Ibid., p.474.

✓ In some provinces the serfs formed only 5% of the population while in others they constituted 70% or more.

three ways depending upon the estates. On some manors, especially on all the crown lands, the rent had to be paid in money dues or the obrok which amounted to five or ten dollars a year (1). It seems to us a rather paltry sum, but it was quite an exorbitant amount for the poor peasant. Sometimes the owner did no farming whatever; in that case he would put all of the serfs on obrok and give all of his land and pasturage to the commune in usufruct. Other proprietors demanded labor-dues, or corvée, which meant that the serf in return for the use of his farm would have to work for his master a certain number of days each week. It was immaterial what the nature of the work was that was demanded of him, he was obliged to do it. Some landowners would have one-half of their serfs work for them the first three days of the week and the other half the last three days. If a land owner had more mujiks than he could employ on his fields, he could convert them into domestics. A third form of rent was partly obròk and partly corvée.

The community rented its land as a whole and as it was thereby made responsible for the rent, it undertook, by means of meetings made up of the heads of families, to apportion the fields among its members. The accepted unit of division was usually the soul, or taxed male head of a family. Each soul would receive a certain amount of land which he was entitled to cultivate for his own use. He was allowed free and unlimited use of the timber in the forests, a privilege which was denied him after the emancipation, and he could pasture

(1) Leroy, Beaulieu, A. Empire of the Tzars, p.414.

his flocks, usually few in number, on the community pasturage. To many Western Europeans this condition of land tenure and community life seemed to be an Utopia; but had they known more of the real conditions they would have changed their minds.

In a very few places where the proprietors were humane, serfage was not bad, but this was quite infrequent. When such was the case the mujik was probably better off than many of the free peasants. He had his house, his garden, some cattle, sheep, implements, and a share of land, in return for which he had only to give a reasonable amount of labor (1). When the crops were poor and times were very hard, he could always rely upon his kind proprietor for some aid. He was protected against oppression and lived a life entirely void of the severer burdens of serfdom. On the other hand, however, most proprietors were oppressors of various classes (2). One class managed their own estates and oppressed simply to increase their revenues. Another class was composed of retired officers who thought that by enforcing on these people the harsh and barbarous measures that had lately been used in the army, they would cure them of their laziness and other vices. There were the absentee owners, who demanded from their acting managers a greater yearly revenue than could rightly be yielded from the estate. And lastly, there was the class of mercantile speculators who bought the land with the purpose of making it a money paying proposition, and who therefore extorted from and exploited those on it.

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1878), p.477.

(2) Ibid., p. 478.

There were certain legal rights which the nobles were entitled to exercise over their serfs, but they also exercised many extra-legal powers. By law, they could impose any dues in labor or money, and might demand personal service, with the one restriction that the serfs should not be thereby ruined and that the number of days fixed by law should be left to them for their own work (1). The owners of the serfs could subject the guilty ones to a restricted amount of punishment, but they often exceeded this amount without any limit. The serfs could do nothing without the consent of their master. When the proprietor became too oppressive some of them became fugitives. Of these, some would seek new homes elsewhere where there was a demand for laborers; others would simply remain fugitives. If caught, they were often severely punished and even sent to Siberia, without any means whatever of restricting injustice. The domestic slaves had no rights at all; they were the property of their master who could do with them what he pleased. He might punish, hire, or sell them. They were advertised and sold like pieces of furniture. There were more of them than the nobles could use and so they became a very lazy set.

The evils of this system were manifold. In the first place it was inhumanitarian. People were treated just as things. Their natural rights, feelings, and property rights, all were ignored. They became lazy and uninterested and took little pains or care with the estates they worked. Nor did the majority of them even try to make their own farms yield the utmost.

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1878), p.478.

Moral responsibility of the individual was obliterated, for it was taken from him and given to the community. Economically, the system was a complete failure, and it was mainly for this reason that the nobles began agitating for a change of some sort. They were deeply in debt, and their estates were mortgaged so highly that something had to happen. Besides this, serfdom was a barrier to all progress whether mental, moral, or material. Men invested with as much autocracy as the nobles had, would eventually abuse their powers; nor could as large a population as the peasants comprised live under such control without suffering seriously from its influence.

CHAPTER IV.

The Reaction Against Serfdom.

The reaction against existing conditions in Russia developed gradually. Emperor Paul was the first Czar to pass a ukase attempting to alleviate matters. In his decree he limited the number of days which the serf had to serve his master to three per week; for previous to that time the mujik sometimes had to spend so much time working for his master that his own work had to be neglected (1). Then in 1803, Emperor Alexander I, who was the first to renounce his right to make gifts of the crown lands, passed a law giving landlords the right to liberate their serfs and to grant them land if they paid for it (2). By this decree, 43,000 serfs were liberated, and by 1819, the serfs had been emancipated in three of the Baltic provinces. But here in return for their freedom they gave their land up to the proprietors. Shortly after that, the nobility in various provinces asked the Czar to establish local committees to frame a new emancipation draft. Land and Liberty became the peasants' watchword and cry. Furthermore, Alexander I made the serfs perpetual tenants in small parts of the manorial lands; and ordered the establishment of a registry in which the payments made to the lords were inscribed, so that no further sums would be levied (3). He also permitted those nobles who wished to do so, to emancipate their serfs; but he was anxious

(1) Baring, M., The Russian People, p.221.

(2) Ibid., p.221.

(3) Ibid., p.222.

to keep the matter quiet. Rather than carry out the same reform throughout his dominions, he prepared to have each proprietor do as he pleased upon his own estate (1).

Emperor Nicholas I was desirous of bringing about a change, but even though he knew the inevitable outcome of the movement toward liberation, he deferred the granting of liberty. During his reign he appointed six committees to investigate conditions and to draw up a plan, but their work amounted to nought. In 1842 he endeavored by a decree to reconcile serfage and liberty by a form of contract between proprietors and their peasants, which left the power in the hands of the former while it aroused their suspicions (2). The time for real action, however, did not come until after the Crimean War in 1856; when after the spreading of some unfounded rumors Alexander II said that although he did not intend to annihilate serfdom, he realized that something was to be done. He consequently laid the matter before the <u>noblesse</u> and urged them to offer a proposal or plan.

Public opinion, the press, and literature intensified the problem which was then up before the landowners. Even as early as 1766, the society of Political Economy had suggested the abolition of that evil. Voltaire insisted that it be done away with at least in the church lands (3). In 1790 Alexander Nikolayevech Kadishcheo in, "A Journey from St. Petersburg to

(1) Dolgoroukou, Prince, <u>Russia and Serf Emancipation</u>, Edinburgh Review. July 1860, v.112 p.201.

(2) Ibid., p. 201.

(3) Kovalevsky, M., <u>Russian Political Institutions</u>, p.219.

Moscow" dared to voice the fact that he was also of such an opinion, for which he was imprisoned (1). Enthusiasm began to spread everywhere. The periodical press came to be full of it; in fact, every paper but one advocated the abolition of serfdom. The educated youths as well as the more liberal older men were filled with boundless zeal to see the plan for emancipation fulfilled. Novelists also had their share of influence, in arousing this spirit. Gogol described the abuses of country life in his book called "Dead Souls". Tourgenieff criticized serfdom in his "Annals of a Sportsman". In this he depicted peasant life before the emancipation from an outsider's point of view (2). Tolstoi, who was a propagandist and a writer, also exercised a wide influence by his writings. Herzen, the author of the "Kolokol", the Bell, was expelled from Russia because of his views, and went to London where he published revolutionary literature that was soon circulated in Russia. And then there was Dostoievski who was loved so dearly by the people. He understood them, and in his books revealed the Russian soul. He was opposed to revolution, for he felt that revolutionists used the wrong tactics. Everyone joined the appeal for liberal reform. But what liberal reforms did they want? Some recommended the principles and institutions in practice in Western Europe, but on closer investigation these did not seem sufficiently satisfactory for the needs of Russia.

(1) Noble, E., Russia and the Russians, p.128.

(2) Baring, M., The Russian People, p.274.

After the call by the Emperor for councils to propose plans, the proprietors met in their respective provinces to consider the question. No two had the same plan to offer. What the government really wanted was emancipation with the least possible change in existing conditions, above all without uprooting the peasant from the soil. The "Chief Committee for Peasant Affairs" spent about six months trying to solve the question, when the Lithuanians suddenly announced their decision in favor of emancipation, and in 1857 appointed local committees to carry it out. Their serfs were to retain their homesteads and some land. Other nobles then asked for the same committees. So on January 8, 1858, a Public Central Board was provided for which was to be the principal committee on the Peasant question (1). There were to be two other committees, one to draft the project for the reform, the other to elaborate the necessary financial measures (2). These committees were composed of people of all classes and opinions, and so made of this one of the first bodies to discuss matters of importance to the state. They agreed unanimously that emancipation was necessary, but differed as to the plans for it. By the Imperial rescript of 1857, the nobility was to retain the right of ownership over the whole land, but the peasants were to be given some land which they would gradually pay for. Because of the fear that there would be a large proletariat class in Russia after the emancipation, unless this were done provisions were made to

(1)Baring, M., The Russian People, p.225.

(2) Ibid., p.225.

keep the rural community, and to allow each mujik to retain a portion of it. Besides making plans for the abolition of serfage, the committees suggested other reforms, which were set aside at that time. Then the Czar Alexander I said that as "the autocratic power created serfage, the autocratic power could abolish it " (1). So on February 19th he signed the law that freed 23,000,000 serfs. √ A manifesto containing the fundamental principles of the law was sent all over the country to be read in all the churches.

The principles embodied in the Emancipation Act of February 19, 1861, were as follows:

1. The serfs should at once receive the civil rights of the free rural classes, and the authority of the proprietor should be replaced by communal self government;

2. The rural communes should as far as possible retain the land they actually held and should in return pay to the proprietor certain yearly dues in money or labor.

3. The government should by means of credit assist the communes to redeem these dues or to purchase the lands ceded to them in usufruct.

Domestic serfs were to serve their masters two more years before obtaining their freedom (2).

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(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1878), p.499.

(2) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1908), p.442.

√ 46,000,000 if we count the state serfs who were given as much power as the emancipated ones.

CHAPTER V.

The Immediate Results of the Emancipation.

The immense task which followed the proclamation of Emancipation in Russia was to regulate affairs to fit the new economic conditions, and to conciliate all parties concerned. The majority of the Arbiters at first showed themselves equal to such a task, and acted in an impartial manner, but before long, some became quite dishonest at the expense of the newly freed serfs. It must be remembered that by the act of February 19, 1861, 23,000,000 serfs were freed with whom it was necessary to make contracts for the land which they were to receive in usufruct. To the peasants, it seemed preposterous that they should have to pay redemption fees; for they had always felt that even though their personal liberty had been taken from them, the land still belonged to them. They refused to believe in the genuineness of the manifesto which had been read to them. They believed that this emancipation was merely a fabrication on the part of the proprietors, and they lacked confidence in the nobles or authorities who endeavored to elucidate the new state of affairs to them (1).

The plan of the government was to have everything remain as it was before 1861, with the least change possible. By the reform 350,964,000 acres of land passed from the landed lords into the hands of the peasants, who were to pay for what they received in installments covering a period of forty-nine years (2).

(1) Leroy-Beaulieu, A., The Empire of the Tsars, p.430.

(2) Baring, M., The Russian People, p.231.

Each peasant was to be given as much land as he needed, and as near the size of the old lot as possible. But he had to pay for this as well as for the use of the forest lands and pasturage which he had previously used without any fee at all. The nobles were to retain their homes as well as some land. This arrangement was satisfactory neither to the landlords nor to the peasants. The former felt that they would not get just compensation for the lands of which they had been deprived, while the latter felt that they were unjustly paying for what really belonged to them. All this, however, was compromised in a fairly satisfactory manner by the government (1).

Many of the immediate results of the emancipation were probably evil rather than good. Disappointment was experienced more or less by all whom the proclamation affected. Neither a class nor a race strife ensued, but general discontent because there had been no sudden change, and because the changes which had come were not the ones which were expected. Privileges as well as obligations were both swept away, and without seeming to have acquired anything, the peasants had to pay additional fees. Part of the failure was due to the fact that the men who were influential in drawing up the reform were not allowed to carry it into execution. The original promoters of the project had hoped for political as well as economic and social change, in order to alleviate the conditions of the mass of the people; but they were removed from duty before they could substantiate any measures to that effect. The economic results soon after 1861

(1) Chapter VI. p.26-27.

are difficult to appraise,as such results become apparent only after a period of time. The property had not yet been entirely rescued from confusion, and furthermore, the effects of emancipation varied in different regions according to the nature of the soil and climate. In the south the benefit derived from the substitution of free for slave labor was presently seen; but in the north where the land was less favorable, serfage was a great factor in keeping the mujik on the soil. The nobles in those parts would often sell their farms and go to the city, for the paid labor was too expensive for the scanty returns of the land (1). Another evil lay in the fact that the peasants' new lands were often too small for the family, as it grew; or on the other hand, the concessions were sometimes too large and unproductive to pay for the redemption fees. And lastly the two million domestic serfs who were freed in 1863 made a new problem, for they composed a class sans land, and sans trade or profession, and the few factories of the cities could not supply them all with labor.

Moral progress was now less hampered as there was a new feeling of responsibility, and individualism could assert itself to some extent. The new peasants had many traits which had been fostered by years of servitude, and which were very difficult to cast off. As the proprietors always received the serfs' domestic and rural expenditures these mujiks were very improvident and had no conception of how to manage and save. The majority of them were and still are stupid and lazy. Many of them were untruthful

(1) Leroy-Beaulieu, A., The Empire of the Tsars, p.455.

and did not respect another's property, pasture or forests. Their tendencies were as yet unprincipled, and although they understood the new situation, their new duties and obligations were somewhat hazy and not clear. A great deal of this was due to the lack of instruction and training as well as to the defects of communal institutions. As a rule the emancipated serfs entertained no hard feelings toward their former masters. They thought that there was no limit to sovereign authority, and therefore were patiently awaiting a second emancipation. However, on the whole, the life of the serfs was changed very little during the early years after they obtained their freedom. But the indolent landowners found it necessary to take some interest in their work, to arouse themselves, to transform their methods and to adjust themselves to the new demands if they wished to be successful.

CHAPTER VI.

The Effect of the Emancipation on the Proprietors.

The three main questions with which the government had to cope after the Edict of Emancipation was passed were:

1. The proportion in which these lands were to be divided between the nobles and serfs;

2. The duration of the transition period;

3. The terms on which the communes were to obtain the right of ownership (1).

In answer to the first of these propositions the following plan was resorted to. The peasants were to own the land in common, and it was to be redistributed not more than once in every twelve years, and then only with the consent of two-thirds of the village. Each peasant was to receive enough land to support a family, for the payment for which the community was responsible. Soil, climate and density of population were to be taken into consideration in making the divisions, so that allotments varied, being smallest in the black soil region of the south (2). The average farm was from 8¼ to 11 acres. In the North, they were sometimes 19, while in the South they were often only 5 acres. Special arbitrators were created to settle differences which came up between the peasants and their former proprietors. But as these were elected by the nobility their decisions were usually partial to that class.

(1) Marx, F., Russia under Alexander II.
Fortnightly Review Sept. 1-1870, vol.14.
p.282.

(2) Baring, M., The Russian People, p.232.

The nobles were allowed to retain, beside their homesteads, a considerable portion of the arable land, the forests, and pasturage. In 1874 these arbitrators were abolished and their functions were entrusted to *Ispravniks*, policemen (1).

The duration of the transition period was to be two years, during which the serfs were obliged to pay the *obrók* or *corvée* as before. The terms on which the communes were to obtain the right of property were these. First of all the amount of remuneration which the landlord was to receive for the soil he ceded, had to be settled. The compensation decided upon was based not on the value of the land, but on the rent (2). The proprietors, however, became greatly dissatisfied and feared that the peasants would never pay the full amount. So to appease the noblesse the government advanced four-fifths of the money on behalf of the peasants. This was given directly to the proprietor in two kinds of bonds, one paying 5% the other 5½% interest (3). The other one-fifth of the money was to be paid by the peasants to the proprietors, and within forty-nine years they were to pay back the government loan in annual installments each of 6%.

As the redemption price was based on the *obrók* or *corvée*, in rich lands proprietors tried to put the settlement off, while in the poorer lands, they were anxious to have the peasants become completely free. The fact is that where the fields were

(1) Bering, M., *The Russian People*, p.233.

(2) Ibid, p. 233.

(3) Thompson, H., *Russian Politics*, p.216.

unfertile the mujiks often paid from 10 to 100% too much for their shares, whereas in the more fertile places they paid from 10 to 100% too little (1). It was for this reason then that the landowners wished them to remain unredeemed, particularly in the south. Very foolishly, at times the peasants took only a minimum amount of land in this region, for they felt that the less land they would have to pay for, the less abused they would be. In some places they unwittingly relinquished their claim to all other land for some meager bit of a field gratis, realizing their mistake too late. In 1863, regulations were made allowing the purchase of land by the peasant; and in 1866 this extended to the crown domains, for in that year the crown peasants were emancipated and were given the same privileges as the others. In 1883 under Alexander III, the permissive regulation became obligatory, for both peasants and landlords had been reluctant in taking advantage of the opportunity to dissolve their bonds (2). This law did not state when or where redemption should take place, but made it obligatory. The government even went so far as to loan the peasants money with which to buy themselves off. The State became a banker for both parties, and the peasants gradually began to free themselves in every respect from their former masters.

What effect did all this have upon the proprietors? They were deprived of their laborers and so were taken from an indolent life and made to think and calculate with regard to their affairs.

(1) Thompson, H., Russian Politics, p.216.

(2) Leroy-Beaulieu, A., Empire of the Tsars, p.436.

They were forced to consider how they were going to earn a livelihood, and how to put their fields to the most profitable use. Those who did not wish to farm let out all their land to the peasants at a fixed yearly sum. The disadvantage of this was that within a comparatively short time the land was exhausted as a result of poor farming. Those who wished to farm either made arrangements of various kinds with their former serfs who were to farm for them; or else, and these were the more enlightened ones, they would sever all connections with their former employees and hire agricultural laborers, organizing and modeling the farms on the Western European plan. It was very difficult, however, to get expert laborers, and it was also hard to raise the capital with which to start scientific agriculture. Since 1861 improvements have been introduced gradually but very slowly.

Generally speaking the revenues of the proprietors after the emancipation did not increase as much as the peasants thought they would, nor were they much diminished. Conditions varied so greatly in the different zones that the status of the lords in these regions varied accordingly. In some places they were materially aided by the change; in others, for the time being at least, things looked much less hopeful, and sometimes the peasants could not pay their taxes, or even the one-fifth share of the redemption settlement. After railroads had been established and scientific methods introduced, conditions were generally improved, as will be discussed later.

CHAPTER VII.

The Peasants after the Emancipation.

Probably more difficult than to ascertain the effects of emancipation on the proprietors, is the question of the results upon those who were emancipated. The pessimists and those who anticipated a sudden change said that the serfs became more indolent and addicted to drink. This, however, as well as many of their other vices was due to the lack of good influence from above; for after February 1861, the nobles were not entitled to take part in the community meetings, and so the intelligent ones among them could exercise no control over the ignorant mujiks. To improve judicial court decisions which were often obtained by bribes of vodka, it was found necessary to create a board of "Rural Supervisors" in 1889 (1). Others say that the progress of the peasantry was prevented by the principles of the communal institutions, and the periodical distributions of land. While the land tenure remained insecure, the tenant was naturally less interested in it than would have been the case, had it been more permanent and his own share compact instead of being scattered.

When the serfs were freed from the ties which had bound them to the nobles they became enslaved to the state. No wonder that they awaited a second Emancipation! First of all, for forty-nine years during which they were to repay the money loaned for their redemption, they were obligated to the government.

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1908). p.477.

But this was not all. They were burdened by numerous other taxes, the imperial tax to the central government, the local one to the zemstvo, and the communal tax to the mir and velost. It had been found expedient to abolish the salt and poll tax to alleviate their distressful condition, but even so they fell so heavily in arrears that the state had to remit part of the taxes that had already been collected. The former proprietors did their best to keep the less intelligent peasants from becoming bankrupt and the more intelligent ones from becoming rich. But despite this there was increasing poverty and pauperism, as is shown by the arrears in taxes. From 1861 to 1881 the poor provinces remained poor and the fertile ones showed no signs of distress. In 1881 to 1901 the arrears of the whole of European Russia rose from 27 to 144 million Roubles (1). There was a decreased quantity of live stock, and even the black soil region became impoverished, so that almost everywhere it became more difficult to meet the tax requirements.

The peasants could be placed in either of three classes (2). The Kulaki were the well-to-do farmers, the backbone of the community, who kept getting richer by buying up their less fortunate neighbors. The middle class peasants owned their land for which they paid taxes partly in labor. Besides these two classes, there was the village Proletariat, the landless class who did not have the money with which to purchase a farm.

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia, 1908, p. 470.

(2) Mavor, J., History of Russia, p.253.

With the change in land tenure and the removal of authority from the nobles to the crown, a change had to be made in the government. The _mir_ was practically the same as what it had been before, except that the nobles were excluded from the meetings and a capitation tax was substituted for the former land tax (1). Besides having the power of taxation the _mir_ had charge of the reapportioning of the land. This took place at different intervals varying from three to fifteen years. Where the redivisions were frequent, there was shown a lack of interest on the part of the peasantry, and as a result, impoverishment of the soil. Then as the peasants could not leave the community without the consent of 2/3 of the members, they were often compelled to remain upon exhausted territory. The _mir_ afforded a shelter to people, and protected them against the outer world, the industrial class, and the proprietors who were trying to buy up great amounts of land. But it made a great mistake in not giving some of its waste lands to its members, who found it necessary to use their arable fields for pasture (2). It encouraged mutual help and inter-dependence, but could not advance any agricultural capital, or offer any system of thorough cultivation. The _Kulaki_ were its most influential members, and they exerted a control which would have been immensely improved by the advice of the nobles.

The government has increased the number of administrators, and has invested them with limitless authority from which there is no appeal. The judicial authority is in control of a regular

(1) Baring, M., _The Russian People_, p.235.

(2) Leroy-Beaulieu, A. _The Empire of the Tsars_, p.513.

tribunal court formed of judges elected by the velost. The velost which was composed of several mirs, the head of which was the starschina, had no assembly meetings but had its work carried on by its representative. To these two units of government was added a third, created in 1864 (1). This one, the zemstvo, consisted of representatives of both the nobility and the peasantry, who met together for a short session once a year to discuss matters of provincial interest. There was a permanent committee elected for three years, and other committees that looked after affairs. They attended to matters of sanitation, road-building, agriculture, insurance, and education; in fact almost anything but matters of a political nature. Its greatest weakness, however, was that it had no great executive power, and so could not enforce its measures. It was hoped at the time of the creation of the zemstvos that these institutions would give political freedom, bring about great social progress, and enlighten the peasant intellectually and morally. Such hopes were soon shattered, for the government refused to grant a constitution, which was so ardently desired by the nobles, nor was the work of the zemstvos effective or rapid enough to show decided changes in any other directions. Schools were established, however, and attempts were made to teach the people intensive farming.

But what can a farmer do with a scientific knowledge of agriculture, if he lacks the implements or the money with which to put it into practice? The mujiks were not only slow and stupid in learning, but they were so impoverished that they

(1) Baring, M., The Russian People, p.249.

could not improve their condition.

CHAPTER VIII.

Agricultural Conditions after the Emancipation.

The agricultural question is of great importance to all the European countries, but to none is it of quite as much interest as to Russia which had in 1905 + 63 million agrarian souls (1). Attempts have been made to better the system, but the capital which is an essential asset to improvement is scarce. The peasantry is composed of very conservative people who oppose radical measures which bring about conditions different from those to which they are accustomed. Yet they will probably awaken, and readily accept these when they find themselves on the verge of starvation. These factors, however, tend greatly to retard a change.

The liberal Czar Alexander III, who was sincerely interested in the people, aided them by abolishing the poll tax in January , 1884 (2). He encouraged the peasants to migrate to more sparsely settled districts, and even established a peasants' bank so as to aid them in acquiring new lands. Two banks were founded during his reign. One was the bank of the nobility established in 1886 (3), which purchased lands from the nobles in order to give them a working capital. The land

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+ The population increases at the rate of three or three and one-half million a year, most of which is agrarian.

(1) Stepniak, <u>Russian Peasantry</u>, p.3.

(2) Hazen, C., <u>Europe Since 1815</u>, p.673.

(3) Pares, B., <u>Russia and Reform</u>, p.419.

which came into possession of this bank was sold to the peasants through the peasants' bank founded in 1883 (1). This proved efficient for only a short time as the banks soon became controlled by swindlers who robbed the unintelligent <u>mujik</u> heartlessly. On May 4, 1906, a Local Land Reform Committee was formed to assist in the operation of the peasants' bank (2). But because of the personnel in this committee the controlling influence was mainly with the landowners of the bureaucracy. The bank bought up land, but as a rule sold it to the rich peasants, so that those who had some, acquired more; while those who had none went without.

Between 1861 and 1887 the arable lands under cultivation increased 25% (3). Peasant lands were being plowed more extensively. About 61% of their lands were under seed. Of the nobles' possessions in 1887 53% constituted the timber region in the north which, with an outlay of money, could have been turned into splendid fields. However, money is too scarce in Russia, so that the proprietors of these regions prefer to keep them in their present condition and receive the modest revenue they yield. There is only 19% of the land which will probably always remain unfit for cultivation, and this is located principally in the frozen regions of the north. There are many swamps and marshes which the <u>mujik</u> will be able to use to great advantage after he has acquired an elementary

(1) Pares, B., <u>Russia and Reform</u>, p.419.

(2) Mavor, J., <u>Economic History of Russia</u>, p.344.

(3) Ibid., p. 282.

knowledge of engineering and puts it to practical use. If with all her arable land Russia cannot sustain herself it is her own fault. A natural increase of the population without a corresponding increase in the means of subsistence is most assuredly a cause for impoverishment. But in her case, the reclamation of thousands of acres which are lying idle, and the education of the masses, will do a great deal in solving the problem.

The zemstvos have endeavored to help by giving instructions in intensive farming. They have specialists who give such agricultural recommendations as are within the means of the mujik to carry out. These suggested improvements have been classed under the following heads:

"(1) Increase of the cereal crops by better seeds and improved implements.

(2) Change in the rotation of crops by the introduction of certain grasses and roots which improve the soil and supply food for live stock.

(3) Improvement and increase of live stock so as to get more labor power, more manure, more dairy produce, and more meat.

(4) Increased cultivation of vegetables and fruits"(1).

With this in view the zemstvos have established stations and depots in which improved implements and better seed are sold at very moderate prices; and the payments are made in installments, so that the poorer members of the community may

(1) Wallace, D. M., Russia (1908) p.489.

also take advantage of these opportunities. Elementary education in gardening has been started in some of the schools. And in some villages, agricultural societies, village banks, and mutual credit societies have been founded, though these have usually been taken advantage of by only a small class of the more liberal-minded peasants. The ordinary mujik is conservative and suspicious in making up his mind to accept anything new and even after realizing its necessity he is slow to respond. Little wonder then that his progress has been of such tardy development, for even most of the well-to-do farmers are not prepared to farm intelligently.

Until 1905, efforts were made in various directions to help and educate the peasant. In that year, however, the tables were turned. Many mujiks held less land than they had held under bondage. They began to cut the timber in the nobles' forests which they appropriated for their own use. Arson and theft became common occurrences. Organizations of the Intelligentia, the intelligent or educated class, promoted discontent, stopped the payment of rent, and encouraged boycotting. There was a widespread disposition to resist authority even when their own interests were concerned (1). Even before the beginning of this crisis, in 1903, a special commission had been appointed to study the means of bettering the condition of the peasants, and especially to facilitate the transformation of their loss into individual holdings (2),

(1) Mavor, J., Economic History of Russia, p.310.

(2) Rambaud, A., Histoire de la Russie, p.909.

which, as the Emperor himself said, was a difficult thing to do. Under the act of February, 1861, they were given the privilege of redeeming their property so that it would be an individual share, but few took advantage of this. The Conservatives, seeing in collective property the traditional basis of Russian life, did not wish to see the communes dissolved. The liberals, on the other hand, were anxious to preserve everything founded on the socialistic plan. * The agrarian reform which they agitated so strenously for did not come, however, until 1909 (1).

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* Certain individualists wished to see this old plan broken up.

(1) Chapter IX. p. 42

CHAPTER IX.

Factory System and Other Reforms.

Factory workmen made up a very small part of the population of Russia previous to the act of February, 1861. Cities were very few in number, and although they had some factories, they employed a very small number of hands. The pre-emancipated serf sometimes obtained permission to work in a factory after promising his master that he would continue to pay the obrok. After emancipation, however, it was only the domestic serfs who could enter the workshops, for the other peasants had land which they could not **leave** without the consent of the velost court. Even then the absentees had to pay a tax. Some farmers who could not derive enough from their land worked on their farms half the year, and were employed in factories the other half, so that very often the rents for the farms were paid not from profits of cultivation but from industrial profits (1). Before the emancipation economic life was selfcontained, for there was immobilization of labor and goods. Money was needed for only a few things, such as vodka and some utensils. Now, however, spinning, weaving, and home industries were replaced by factory goods. More things became necessities,as firewood, petroleum, and agricultural implements. Under these conditions some households thrived while others became greatly impoverished.

The factory system was forced to develop for several reasons. In the first place there was, as a result of the above described conditions,an unlimited amount of cheap labor which

(1) Mavor, J., Economic History of Russia, p.262.

could be put to work in the shops at very low wages. These men constituted a rapidly growing proletariate class in the towns, whose members accepted inferior wages and conditions of labor. Secondly, there was a forced increase in the growth of the factory system due to the high protective tariff. Foreigners advanced most of the capital for some of the industries, such as those of woolen and cotton, which became very successful. Railroads also began to flourish as a result of foreign enterprise. This was accomplished mainly through the efforts of Sergius De Witte, one of the most able financiers and economists that Russia has ever had. He introduced measures, however, which were a drain on the farmers and left them in a poor condition, because of the heavy taxation occasioned by the need for money for carrying them into effect.

As a result of this new economic system, the labor movement passed from a purely economical into a political rebellion, the nature of the demands being of an economical character (1). The close connection between country villages and industrial centers has had an influence on the dissemination of revolutionary ideas, which usually sprang up in the cities. Revolutionary clubs were organized; papers were published; and students and the educated classes spread their ideas and clamors for reform. The cry was, in turn, taken up by the workmen, who in the early twentieth century organized strikes, and demanded better wages and more efficient factory legislation. The Russo-Japanese war also had its influence in instigating petitions for a change,

(1) Mavor, J., Economic History of Russia, p.367.

as the masses of the people blamed the government for the war. Besides the strikes, the peasants burned the homes of nobles, and assassinations and bomb-throwing were counter-balanced by acts of violence and oppression on the part of the government. Conditions became so terrible that the Emperor was forced to offer something to appease the people. Therefore, on August 15, 1905, he issued a manifesto granting what the people had so earnestly begged for, a representative assembly. This was a representative assembly in name only, for the sessions of the body were not to be public and the elections were to be conducted by the bureaucracy only (1). The revolutionary parties strengthened their agitation, and after resorting to a general strike in October, 1905, compelled the Czar to issue another manifesto. In this one he granted freedom of speech and of association, and extended suffrage to those who did not have it. The following year the first Duma convened, which was dissolved within two months, only to be succeeded by another assembly that met the same fate. The third Duma which met in 1907 was not as liberal as the two preceding ones, yet it passed a very important agrarian reform which was very likely the work of the autocracy itself. That was the Ukase of November, 1909, which provided for the breaking up of the mir, the freeing of the peasants from the previous authority of the mir, and the substitution of individual ownership of the land for collective holding (2). Even before this agrarian measure had been passed,

(1) Hazen, C., Europe since 1815, p.912.

(2) Ibid., p. 717.

an elaborate system of factory laws was provided (1). It contained provisions for the inspection of the workshops, and provisions to the effect that the rules of the factory were to be posted in each room. There was to be compensation for accidents in certain occupations, and the government, in these regulations, showed no preference of the employers' interest over that of the employees.

Due to the industrial revolution in Russia, as in other countries before, the bourgeoisie began to develop, and it is they especially who are now clamoring for reforms, particularly political reforms that will mean something. It is to a large extent in this rising class that the hope of Russia lies.

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(1) Pares, B., Russia and Reform, p.454.

CONCLUSION.

Although the consequences of the emancipation of the serfs in Russia are more numerous and complex than can be dealt with fully in so brief a treatment, I have endeavored to touch upon the most important ones. It seems as if almost every act, measure, institution, or event which has occurred since 1861 has been directly or indirectly influenced or caused by this ukase which granted liberty to so many people.

The government has been willing to pass legislation directed toward the interest of the state, although in so doing it occasionally had to sacrifice some of the powers of the nobles. Yet it never enforced anything which might have lessened its own authority. Not until a democratic form of government replaces the autocratic form in existence, can there be a rapid advance in Russia. Since the emancipation, some of the peasants have taken advantage of the schools and so have lessened the percentage of illiterates, although even yet the number of illiterates in Russia is greater than that of any other European country. They are slow in learning and observing rules of health and sanitation. However, in some districts they have learned to keep their homes in a cleaner and more healthful condition. Crime has diminished somewhat among them, but the government seems not to be so successful in eliminating drunkenness. From the first the peasant was very strong economically; his political importance is still to be seen.

With this new state of affairs came, as was before stated, the new middle class. It is made up of the capitalists

and professionals, the educated people through whose influence a marked change may be expected in Russia in the future. Education is what is needed most of all in that vast Eastern European country, parts of which seem so removed from Western civilization. After the masses have become educated, they will be less superstiticus and conservative, and they will understand more intelligently what they need and how to get it. They will themselves make efforts at initiating reforms, and will not allow a despotic government to deceive them with vague, meaningless promises. Then, and not until then, will their progress be of marked rapidity and consequence.

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In M. Baring's history of the Russian people, he traces very clearly, all the acts and decrees which bound the peasant to the soil as well as those which later emancipated him. It is a history of Russian life rather than a political or an economic history.

Kovalevsky's two volumes are especially important for their accounts of the political institutions of Russia. The one on "The Manners and Customs of the Russian People" gives an interesting description of earlier and later peasant life.

Leroy-Beaulieu has written in three volumes a survey of Russia under the Tsars. In the first volume which he calls "The Country and its People", he gives in detailed description, a picture of Russian life. He depicts the peasant, the mir, its government, etc. This work was written in French, but has been translated by Z. A. Ragozin, a Russian, who enriched it with footnotes illustrating points and occasionally raising some slight objection.

Mavor's work is an economic history and is therefore especially helpful for the information it contains on the agrarian conditions and the factory system after the emancipation.

Pares, in his book called "Russia and Reform", gives an optimistic account of the progress of the peasants, and seems to be quite partial to them.

"The Russian Peasantry" by "Stepniak" deals with the agrarian situation in Russia after the Emancipation, particularly during the years just previous to 1905.

Sir Donald McKenzie Wallace, an Englishman, wrote one of the most interesting historical descriptions of Russia that has ever been written. As he spent six years of uninterrupted residence in Russia, and later spent two more years in travel there, his knowledge of the people and conditions are based mainly upon observation. Furthermore, he received valuable aid and information from many other well qualified persons, among whom were M. Miliutin, Prince Novikoff, Dr. Asher, and M. Yakushkin. His first edition of "Russia" appeared in 1878, but since then there have been two, one published in 1905, and the other in 1914, which were prepared as a result of further study on the part of the author. The history is not only impartial and authentic, but is made quite entertaining by the introduction of short personal interviews which Wallace had with some of the peasants. By means of these interviews he very effectively illustrates their ideas and characteristics.